

# Ryan Belisle

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## Principal Design Systems Leader & Architect

**Principal Design Systems Leader** with 20+ years of experience delivering measurable business value through strategic design systems. A hands-on architect and product designer who has led 4 enterprise systems, built 400+ components, and consistently accelerated development velocity by 24-30%. Expertise in driving adoption, establishing governance, and ensuring quality and consistency from 0-to-1 builds to mature, large-scale ecosystems.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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### BlackLine | Los Angeles, CA (Remote)

Mar 2023 - Mar 2025

Leading cloud-based financial software company that automates accounting processes including financial close, consolidation, and accounts receivable for large enterprises and midsize businesses worldwide.

#### As Design Systems Lead & Product Manager

*Directed the product vision and strategic roadmap for the Pantheon Design System, leading a 12-16 person UI Platform team while defining the operational frameworks and adoption strategies to scale its impact. This leadership role was part of a promotion where I simultaneously served as the hands-on Principal Product Designer and UX Architect.*

- Revitalized a struggling design system by taking on a newly-created 'Design System Lead' role to define and execute a multi-year product vision, strategy, and roadmap. I took complete ownership of the end-to-end lifecycle, authoring 80% of requirements and establishing OKRs to drive organizational alignment. This strategic leadership doubled team velocity and component output, while new transparent roadmaps built organizational trust and reduced my time spent clarifying release schedules by 80%.
- Architected a robust operational framework from the ground up to eliminate chaotic workflows and introduce predictability. I instituted a new Product Development Life Cycle (PDLC) that defined the entire product process, introducing new Agile/Scrum ceremonies like sprint planning and backlog grooming. This framework, centralized in new Jira and Confluence spaces, resulted in higher quality planning and design practices and streamlined the end-to-end development process, reducing implementation time by an estimated 20-30%.
- Pioneered a strategic "pilot program" that transformed the design system's adoption model from passive to proactive. I personally oversaw the system's implementation across 40+ modernization projects, while embedding my team directly into 12+ of those to coach, train, and co-create features, establishing a successful federated contribution model. This partnership set a new standard for the organization, ensuring 100% adoption of the design system (both Figma and React) on all new initiatives, which accelerated product roadmaps and built organizational trust.
- Spearheaded a dedicated, quarter-long quality initiative to resolve over 1,000 critical, PDS-related bugs, clearing a path for future innovation. This focused effort successfully reduced the engineering capacity required for bug-fixing from 50% down to a sustainable ~15% in subsequent quarters. To achieve this, I implemented proactive daily PR reviews and championed a new automated visual regression testing process, which enhanced system stability and trust by minimizing rework and reducing downstream defects by an estimated 200-300%.

- Co-drove a business-critical accessibility overhaul to meet annual SAP Premium Qualification (SAP-PQ) standards, a requirement for retaining ~35% of company revenue. My dual-pronged strategy involved leading a remediation initiative that resolved over 640+ critical legacy bugs, while also establishing new guidelines ensuring all net-new PDS components and enhancements were WCAG 2.1 AA compliant from release. This work successfully secured the year-over-year SAP qualification and reduced QA validation time across product teams.
- Fostered a culture of cross-functional collaboration by establishing a new communication and engagement program. I launched multiple weekly touchpoints (Design Reviews, Office Hours), dedicated PDS MS Teams channels for global support, and a new program for detailed release notes for all design and code updates. This transparent feedback loop reduced design decision-making time from one week to a single day, increased designer and engineer satisfaction with the system by an estimated 40%, and broke down silos across 12+ product lines.
- Spearheaded a foundational, holistic audit of the entire Pantheon Design System—spanning Figma libraries, the React library, and all documentation—to establish a baseline for quality. The Component Health Tracker I created revealed critical findings: only ~18% of components were aligned between design and code, while over 80% had significant visual, functional, and accessibility issues. The 2,000+ identified issues were documented as user stories to form a data-driven roadmap for system-wide debt reduction, enabling us to strategically tackle this backlog using ~15% of our engineering capacity each quarter.
- Became the de-facto design system SME for the entire product organization, providing over 3,200+ hours of leadership, support, coaching, and mentorship to 20+ product teams (including 16+ designers, 40+ PMs, and 200+ engineers). To ensure quality and consistency, I personally reviewed over 4,000+ design and code PRs—providing feedback within 24-48 hours—and ran all PDS repos locally for end-to-end design testing. This dedication to hands-on support established system-wide trust and accelerated the correct implementation of the design system.

### **As Principal Product Designer | UX Engineer | UX Architect**

*Owned the end-to-end product design, architecture, and modernization for the Pantheon Design System, serving as its primary core design contributor. Promoted from Staff to Staff II/Principal, this hands-on role grew to include serving as the team's Design Systems Lead and Product Manager while I retained full ownership of the system's execution, craft, and 1:1 parity between Figma and React.*

- Architected an end-to-end design token pipeline, establishing Tokens Studio as the source of truth for 2500+ tokens. This system streamlined workflows by syncing tokens into Figma Variables for designers, while an export-to-Style Dictionary process automatically compiled them into cross-framework formats (CSS, SCSS, JS) for developers. The unified pipeline enabled UI consistency across 12+ product lines on varied tech stacks (React, Angular), significantly improving both designer and developer efficiency.
- Architected and designed a new, unified Documents solution for all enterprise product lines, defining requirements for features like document listing and uploading through 12+ user interviews. The final system of 8+ components was fully responsive for flexible layouts and achieved 1:1 visual and functional parity between Figma and React. It was adopted by 4+ product teams within the first year, saving an estimated 400+ hours of redundant design and development effort.
- Architected, designed, and directed the end-to-end lifecycle for 60+ net-new components and 240+ system-wide feature enhancements. In collaboration with engineering, I defined the API for each component, established guidelines for component documentation, and implemented processes that ensured API parity between Figma and React. My hands-on Design QA, including final CSS polish, guaranteed 1:1 visual/functional parity and significantly reduced the creation of one-off components and redundant design and engineering effort.
- Managed, maintained, and supported the entire PDS Figma UI Kit—a central asset for 12+ designers, 40+ PMs, and 200+ engineers—overseeing 100+ components, patterns and templates, and 2500+ design tokens (published as Figma variables & styles via Tokens Studio). I established a communication strategy that increased transparency and reduced stakeholder confusion by delivering detailed SEMVER release notes across multiple channels (Figma, Confluence, MS Teams) and providing ongoing education through various team meetings and dedicated office hours.

- Architected and designed a next-generation, fully accessible (WCAG 2.1 AA) Forms system to solve critical workflow issues for both designers and developers. For designers, I replaced a legacy Figma library that required manual component overrides by rebuilding an extensive set of controls with modern best practices. For developers, this eliminated reliance on problematic AntD forms by creating a new, scalable system on React Aria. I defined a unified API and component composition model for both platforms, which cut design and engineering integration time by 50%.
- In collaboration with engineering partners, I led a strategic overhaul of the enterprise DataTable, conducting a design and technical audit to replace a legacy solution with a new, high-performance architecture on TanStack. I architected and designed a new, highly configurable Figma component composition, defining a new API and creating 40+ features (like inline editing and drag-and-drop). This new design architecture resulted in a 40% increase in rendering performance, an 80% reduction in table-related bugs, and improved designer and developer efficiency.
- Drove a major initiative that increased visual and functional parity between React and Figma components from ~20% to over 80%, improving application design consistency. This required refactoring the AntD theme dependency and all PDS components for 90% token coverage, while modernizing Figma components with auto-layout, props, and token variables. My hands-on execution of the CSS styling eliminated design-to-engineering handoffs for this work, enabling quicker delivery of a truly unified system.
- Overhauled a cumbersome, web-font-based iconography workflow, replacing a 6-step manual process with a new system of 250+ individual Figma icon components. The new system reduced the time to find and place an icon from ~5 minutes to under 30 seconds by enabling designers to instantly add, swap, size, and colorize them using design tokens. I migrated over 100 core components to this system and ensured 100% sizing accuracy with the coded PDS Icon component, significantly improving designer efficiency and visual consistency.

## **Citizens | Johnston, RI (Hybrid)**

**Apr 2019 - Mar 2022**

Major financial services company offering personal and business banking, student loans, credit cards, and wealth management through 1,200+ branches and 3,300 ATMs nationwide.

### **Design Systems Lead & Principal Design Engineer | Principal Product Designer | Product Manager | UX Architect**

*Directed the 0-to-1 creation of Citizens' first enterprise design system, guiding a team of 4-8 while acting as the primary contributor. My role spanned from setting the visual and architectural vision to the hands-on building of 160+ components and a multi-platform token system, establishing the governance and adoption strategies for enterprise-wide scaling.*

- Defined the product vision and strategic OKRs for the enterprise design system, orchestrating its holistic leadership from strategy to delivery. I established a data-informed prioritization framework to balance competing requirements from 15+ teams, translating them into a transparent roadmap and a prioritized backlog of actionable user stories. My leadership in release planning and agile ceremonies drove a predictable cadence of high-impact releases, directly enabling consuming teams to accelerate their feature delivery.
- Architected a federated governance model to standardize contributions and reduce design debt across 15+ product teams. By formalizing workflows for intake, triage, review, versioning, and support, and introducing a clear communication strategy, we tripled high-quality contributions in the first year and enabled scalable, cross-functional collaboration.
- Transformed the design system from a technical concept into a strategic business asset, driving adoption from 0% to over 80% on key product lines. Achieved this by championing its value to executive/VP-level sponsors through continuous evangelism, roadshows, and strategic updates, which secured dedicated multi-year funding and fostered a collaborative culture.
- Cultivated a high-performing, cross-functional design systems team from the ground up, fostering a culture of ownership and meticulous craft that resulted in 100% team retention. This team became a center of excellence whose reliable delivery of high-quality releases directly accelerated product development timelines for consuming teams by an estimated 40%.

- Spearheaded a foundational audit of the entire digital product ecosystem—analyzing the code and design of multiple websites and apps and conducting 20+ cross-functional user interviews—that identified critical inconsistencies and gaps that were fragmenting the user experience and slowing down design and development cycles. This research directly informed the 0-to-1 creation of the design system's architecture, strategy, roadmap, visual language, and initial component selection.
- Architected, designed, and built the entire multi-platform design token system from the ground up using Style Dictionary. This automated pipeline for 480+ tokens (color, space, typography, etc.) created a single source of truth across Sketch, Figma, Web, iOS, and Android, dramatically increasing brand consistency and efficiency while saving thousands of design and development hours.
- Directed the architecture of the 80+ component CBDS UI Kit in Sketch, establishing a single source of truth that increased team velocity by 40% and cut design inconsistencies by 80%. I personally designed the majority (~80%) of these components with a systematic approach to component API and composition to ensure parity with the final code, while collaborating with my team on the remainder.
- Led the creation of a cohesive, cross-platform library that accelerated feature delivery by an estimated 40%; architected and designed all 80+ web components and foundational asset systems (icons, fonts, logos), personally developing the majority (~80%) of the core Vanilla HTML/CSS components while collaborating with the team on the remaining and the derivative Angular/React versions.
- Architected, designed, and built the CBDS documentation website from scratch, establishing the definitive source of truth for 200+ practitioners. The site provided comprehensive guidance on all system aspects, including everything from core visual foundations and the multi-platform design token system to the complete 80+ component library with detailed APIs, boosting developer and designer self-service by over 80%.
- Functioned as the lead guardian of system quality, personally performing meticulous design and code reviews for 100% of contributions; established rigorous QA checklists and a formal PR approval process that ensured pixel-perfect design-to-code parity and system integrity.
- Broke down silos and eliminated design-dev friction by instituting collaborative rituals like office hours and critiques, mentoring practitioners on system usage and increasing team velocity by ensuring design intent was translated flawlessly into code on the first attempt.
- Championed and enforced an accessibility-first mindset, partnering with experts to achieve 100% WCAG 2.1 AA compliance across all system components and integrating automated checks into the build process, successfully mitigating legal risk and ensuring equal access for all users.

## **CVS Health | Woonsocket, RI (On-site)**

**Apr 2015 - Apr 2019**

Leading health solutions company and largest U.S. pharmacy benefits manager, operating 9,900+ retail drugstores and serving over 100 million plan members with comprehensive healthcare services.

### **Senior UX Designer | UX Engineer | Product Manager | Design Systems Lead**

*Led UX design for the CVS retail experience, overseeing two major e-commerce re-platforms and the hands-on design of several 0-to-1 products. In parallel, I initiated and built the company's first design system, evangelizing its value and creating the pilot that secured enterprise funding to unify the brand.*

- Pioneered the enterprise design system initiative from concept to formal funding, personally leading strategy, evangelizing to executives, and architecting, designing, and engineering the pilot system that unified the CVS retail brand.
- Architected and built a multi-framework design system from the ground up, featuring 200+ components, a robust design token pipeline, and a hand-coded HTML/CSS framework (SCSS, BEM) that powered the CVS.com e-commerce re-platform.

- Led the end-to-end UX/UI design and provided front-end development expertise for two major re-platforming initiatives of CVS.com, redesigning the core shopping experience (Category, PLP, PDP, Search) and a new, flexible templating system.
- Drove the strategy and execution for multiple high-impact 0→1 products, including Curbside, Remote Payments, and Digital Receipts, owning the full lifecycle from product thinking and UX/UI design to front-end prototyping.
- Transformed the design and development culture by introducing and operationalizing a modern toolchain (Sketch, Zeplin, Invision, Jira), shifting the organization towards a more collaborative, Lean, and Agile workflow.
- Directed cross-functional and external vendor teams on technical implementation, leading the front-end architecture and component library build for the primary e-commerce platform in a multi-year, international collaboration.
- Established the design system's product roadmap, governance model, and adoption strategy, successfully mentoring and training product teams to increase system adoption and radically improve development efficiency and brand consistency.
- Engineered significant improvements in designer efficiency by creating internal tools, including a "Documentation UI Kit" in Sketch that standardized design annotations and sped up the specification process for the entire UX team.

## **PICnet | Washington, D.C. (Remote)**

**Jan 2007 - Mar 2015**

Technology consulting firm specializing in web development and software solutions for nonprofits, government agencies, and international organizations, including the Soapbox Engage fundraising platform.

### **Lead Web & UX Designer | Lead Front-end Developer | Creative Director**

*Architected and built the "Soapbox" CMS platform, then leveraged it to single-handedly design and develop 360+ client websites and the 7-app "Soapbox Engage" suite. As the sole Lead Designer and Developer, this system-based approach fundamentally transformed the company's delivery model, increasing project profitability by 60%.*

- Architected and built the "Soapbox" SAAS CMS platform and its foundational, white-label design system from scratch, utilizing Adobe Photoshop, Sketch, SCSS, PHP, and Twig. This comprehensive system featured a custom front-end framework, a flexible design tokens system, reusable page templates, a full style guide, and a library of 60+ components that provided the scalable foundation for over 360 client websites.
- Spearheaded the end-to-end design and front-end development of the 'Soapbox Engage' suite—a 7-app product line for critical nonprofit functions like donations, events, and e-commerce, now trusted by 500+ organizations—whose themeable, Salesforce-integrated micro-frontends significantly cut client setup time, providing a key competitive advantage over similar third-party products.
- Revolutionized the company's design and delivery model by centering it on the newly created design system, which increased per-project profitability by 60%. This strategic shift compressed the core design and development phases of our process from 6 weeks to an efficient 2-week cycle.
- As the sole design and development lead, owned the entire creative and technical execution for the 360+ client portfolio, managing a full-cycle UX design process that included gathering client requirements, producing wireframes and design templates, and iterating through a 2-3 round design review and feedback cycle prior to development on the Joomla-based platform.
- Established and owned the full spectrum of user experience, front-end architecture, and brand identity systems for the parent company and its core products, demonstrating versatile, multi-disciplinary leadership across all design and development initiatives.

- Designed and engineered 10+ custom, cross-client compatible HTML email templates, solving for rendering inconsistencies across difficult clients like Outlook, Gmail, and Yahoo Mail. These reusable templates were integrated into major marketing platforms, including MailChimp and Constant Contact, to support client communication and campaign strategies.

## **Advanced Financial Services, Inc. | Newport, RI (On-site)**

**Mar 2004 - Mar 2007**

Financial institution providing mortgage lending services and bill consolidation loans across multiple states, specializing in alternative financing solutions for residential lending.

### **Senior Web & UX Designer | Full-stack Web Developer**

*Led all web initiatives with full autonomy as the company's sole Sr. Designer & Full-stack Developer. I architected and built the "My AFS Loan" customer portal and its component-based CMS from the ground up, and engineered "CallTracker," a pioneering enterprise application that integrated CISCO phones with web services to improve agent performance.*

- Led the end-to-end creation of the "My AFS Loan" portal, building a pioneering, component-based architecture and CMS from the ground up to enhance customer self-service and establish a reusable design system that improved development velocity and UI consistency.
- Innovated the "CallTracker" application to solve a critical business need, engineering a first-of-its-kind tool that unified disparate hardware (CISCO phones) and software (Flash, ASP.NET) to monitor and record calls for training and compliance, directly improving agent performance and service quality.
- Drove the complete product lifecycle for all web initiatives with full autonomy, proactively mastering back-end technologies to single-handedly manage projects from UX strategy and information architecture through to full-stack development and deployment in a complex financial services environment.

## **Gearboxx Interactive Studios | Dulles, VA (On-site)**

**Aug 2000 - Jul 2002**

Full-service multimedia company providing web design, development, hosting, print design, animation, video production, audio production, and photography for government and commercial clients.

### **Web & Interactive Designer | Web & Multimedia Developer**

*Led the creation of the Gearboxx DATASITE system, a pioneering SaaS website builder, while also directing the design and development for a diverse portfolio of client websites and interactive multimedia applications. My role blended product innovation with hands-on execution, establishing scalable processes that improved project efficiency across all client work.*

- Architected and led the end-to-end development of the Gearbox DATASITE system, a pioneering SaaS website builder with an integrated pattern library and CMS that streamlined workflows, accelerated project time-to-market, and improved budget adherence.
- Established all project strategy and technical governance for client engagements, defining roadmaps, functional scopes, and budgets while instituting user-centric design principles to guide all development efforts.
- Drove the complete product lifecycle for a diverse portfolio of digital solutions, from complex websites to interactive applications, by personally owning all UX strategy, UI design, and front-end development.

## **Altair Technologies | Virginia Beach, VA (On-site)**

**Nov 1998 - Jul 2000**

Full-service multimedia company specializing in e-Learning experiences and website development for military training and commercial applications.

### **Web & Multimedia Designer | Web & Multimedia Developer**

*Spearheaded the user-centric design and development of immersive learning platforms for military and commercial clients. I engineered dynamic applications for web and CD-ROM using Flash, ActionScript, and Director, managing the full front-end and back-end integration. My role blended programming with creating all multimedia content, including 3D animation and audio.*

- Spearheaded the user-centric design and product strategy for interactive learning platforms, architecting immersive, simulation-based training modules for military and commercial clients.
- Engineered and programmed dynamic applications for web and CD-ROM, managing the complete front-end development (Flash, ActionScript, HTML) and back-end integration.
- Elevated user engagement and immersion by producing a full suite of custom multimedia content, including 3D animations, motion graphics, original audio, and cohesive brand collateral.

## **HybridR1 | Fremont, CA (Hybrid)**

**Aug 2001 - Dec 2003**

Co-founded full-service digital agency providing corporate branding, web design and development, interactive media, print design, user experience design, and audio production for commercial clients.

### **Web & Interactive Designer | Front-end Developer | Graphic Designer**

*Co-founded a full-service digital agency, leading all design and development execution. I established the agency's creative workflows, technical standards, and operational protocols from the ground up. My hands-on role involved translating all client business requirements into complete branding packages, UX artifacts, websites, and multimedia experiences.*

- Directed all client-facing projects from conception to completion, defining the agency's operational protocols, technical standards, and creative workflows to ensure consistent, high-quality delivery.
- Translated complex business requirements into tangible design solutions, personally creating all user experience artifacts, interface designs, storyboards, and complete branding packages for a diverse client portfolio.
- Architected and built dozens of websites and interactive experiences, managing the full technology stack (HTML/CSS/JS, PHP/MySQL, Flash) to implement sophisticated solutions like the multi-part digital infrastructure for key client Dteknology.

## **SKILLS**

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**Design System Architecture and Governance:** Atomic Design, Component Libraries, Contribution Models, Design and Technical Auditing, Design System Advocacy, Design System Development, Design Systems, Design System Standards, Design Tokens, Enterprise Scale Design Systems, Measuring Impact (ROI), Multi Platform System Architecture, Product Thinking, Release Management, Scalability Planning, System Auditing and Maintenance, Systems Design, Theming Strategy and Implementation

**Product Design and Craftsmanship:** Accessibility (A11y), Developer Experience (DX), Information Architecture (IA), Interaction Design (IxD), Product Design, Prototyping, Responsive Web Design (RWD), User Experience (UX) Design, User Interface (UI) Design, User Research, Visual Design, Wireframing

**Technical Proficiency and Engineering:** API Design, Code Review, CSS, Design and Code Integration, Design to Code Automation, Front End Development, HTML, JavaScript, Modern Front End Frameworks, NPM Package Management, Performance Optimization, Systems Engineering, Technical Architecture, UX Engineering, Version Control

**Strategic Leadership and Product Vision:** Agile Methodologies, Business Acumen, Cross Functional Team Leadership, Design Maturity, Feature Prioritization, Leadership, Product Discovery, Product Strategy, Resource Planning, Risk Management, Roadmap and Backlog Management, Strategic Thinking, Team Management, Technical Direction

**Collaboration Communication and Operations:** Communication, Cross Functional Collaboration, Design Documentation, Design Facilitation, Design Operations, Mentorship, Presentations, Project Management, Stakeholder Management, Written Communication

**Problem Solving Mindset and Emerging Skills:** Adaptability, AI Literacy, Analytical Thinking, Continuous Improvement Mindset, Critical Thinking, Design Thinking, Problem Solving, Systems Thinking

**Tools and Tech Stack:** Abstract, Adobe Creative Suite, Confluence, Figma, Git, GitHub, Jira, Sketch, Storybook, Style Dictionary, Zeplin, ZeroHeight

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Courses & Workshops

AI for Designers — Interaction Design Foundation (IDF) [In progress]	Aug 2025
AI for Everyone — DeepLearning.ai [In progress]	Jul 2025
Enhancing UX Workflow with AI — Uxcel [In progress]	Jul 2025
Design Token and Component Architecture — Nathan Curtis, Smashing Conference	Feb 2025
Design Systems 101 — Dan Mall, Design Systems University (DSU)	Apr 2024
Architecting Design Systems — Nathan Curtis, Smashing Conference	Oct 2022
Operating Design Systems — Nathan Curtis, Clarity Conference	Nov 2021
Making Design Systems People Want to Use — Dan Mall, Design Systems University (DSU)	Dec 2020
Leading Highly-Effective UX Teams — Nielsen Norman Group (NNg)	Apr 2020
Design Systems & Pattern Libraries — Nielsen Norman Group (NNg)	Apr 2020
Being a UX Leader — Nielsen Norman Group (NNg)	Apr 2020

### Certifications

PM Masterclass for Designers — Maven	Feb 2025
Executive Communication & Influence for Senior ICs and Managers — Maven	Dec 2024
Mastering Product Discovery — Maven	Dec 2023
Describing the ROI of Design — Maven	Nov 2023
Professional Scrum Product Owner I (PSPO I) — Scrum.org	Oct 2022
Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO) — Scrum Alliance	Dec 2021

### Education

Certificate in Computer Art & Animation — School of Communication Arts   Raleigh, NC	Dec 1998
Certificate in Multimedia Design — School of Communication Arts   Raleigh, NC	Dec 1997